

PREFACE.

The Bhagavad Gítá, 'The Divine Song,' or 'The Song of the Adorable One,' is allowed to represent the loftiest flight of Hindu philosophy. It consists of a supposed dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna. Its great aim is to harmonise the doctrines of the Yoga, the Sánkhyā and the Vedānta, combining with them the doctrine of faith (*bhakti*) in Krishna, and of stern devotion to caste duties.

The author also saw "that the pure abstraction of a religious devotee was not possible for all men, and that it was opposed to the just claims of family and caste. He contended still that mental devotion (*buddhi yoga*) was the best, but that devotion by work (*karma yoga*) might also lead to the great blessing of *nirvána*. But all work must be done without 'attachment' (*sanga*), simply as a duty, and especially without any desire for reward (*phala*, fruit). But though works are so far admitted into his system, the highest state below is that of perfect repose, with constancy in meditating on the Supreme; and his highest type of man is the recluse (*muni*), taking up a solitary resting place far from the haunts of men, renouncing all the blessings of this world, and even hope itself, holding the mind in check until thought ceases, and thus waiting in pious abstraction for the happy hour when he will be absorbed into the infinite Brahma."*

The author, although in some respects in advance of his age, was a Vaishnava Brahman, who held the usual polytheistic and pantheistic ideas. To gain authority, his opinions were attributed to Krishna, and the poem was foisted in as part of the Mahābhārata.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS.

Of these there have been several. The first was made in 1785, by Sir Charles Wilkins, to which was prefixed an Introduction by Warren Hastings. This forms the basis of the translation in this volume, but it has been carefully revised by comparing it with more recent translations. It has been taken from an edition edited by the Rev. J. Garrett in 1846, containing the Sanskrit, Canarese, and English in parallel columns, for a copy of which the compiler is indebted to Colonel Jacob, translator of the *Vedānta Sāra*.

* Introduction to the Translation by Davies, pp. 10, 11.

The next translation was made by Mr. J. C. Thompson in 1855, and published by Trübner. Mr. Kasinath Trimbak Telang, of Bombay, published an English translation in 1875. This, probably revised, was adopted in 1887 by Max Müller in the "Sacred Books of the East." The author, in the Preface, gives the following account of the general principles followed in the translation:

"My aim has been to make that translation as close and literal a rendering as possible of the Gītā, as interpreted by the commentators Sankarākārya, Sridharasvāmin, and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Reference has also been frequently made to the commentary of Rāmānugākārya and also to that of Nilakantha." (p. 35.)

There are numerous notes and two useful indexes. Translations of the Sanatsugātiya and Anugītā are appended. The volume is published by the Clarendon Press, price 10s. 6d. It is strongly recommended to the student.

In 1882, a translation was published by the Rev. John Davies in Trübner's "Oriental Series." The translation is excellent, and there are numerous valuable notes. It is now issued by Kegan Paul & Co., price 6s.

About 1888, a translation, with commentary by J. M. Chatterji, was published by Trübner.

In 1895 a translation, professedly by Mrs. Besant, was published by the Theosophical Publishing Society, London, price 6d. cheap edition. She acknowledges that her knowledge of Sanskrit is imperfect; but her translation has passed through the hands of Indian gentlemen whose names are given. Many of the technical terms are retained. Some of the renderings are happily expressed.

During the same year a translation, price 4 annas, "edited and published by Manmatha Nath Dutt, M.A.," appeared in Calcutta.

There is a very free poetical translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, entitled "*The Song Celestial*."

The translations differ considerably with regard to particular verses. Indian commentators belonging to the Dwaita, Adwaita, and Visishtadwaita Sects, try to make the poem express their own views. The main features of the work, however, are given, more or less correctly, in all of them.
